

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 24720 241522Z

47

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 AID-05 /083 W
----- 007629

R 241028Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4708

INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, LA, TH

SUBJ: THAI-LAO MEKONG RIVER CONTRONTATION

REF: A. BANGKOK 24625 B. DAO IR NO 6 895 0532 75 OF 211333Z
NOV 75

SUMMARY: DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN VOWS TO RETRIEVE THAI
PATROL BOAT BEACHED ON MEKONG; THE RTG EXPLAINS ITS POSITION
TO THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE; AND CHATCHAI URGES THE PRESS NOT
TO CONSIDER THE INCIDENT A SERIOUS ONE. END SUMMARY.

1. A WEEK AFTER IT OCCURRED, THE LATEST MEKONG RIVER CLASH
(REFTELS) CONTINUES TO GENERATE CONSIDERABLE PRESS PLAY IN
BANGKOK. WITH SIXTEEN WIRE SERVICES, NETWORK, AND AMERICAN
PAPERS REPRESENTED HERE AND FEEDING REPORTS ON THE SITUATION
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 24720 241522Z

TO THE U.S., THE EMBASSY FEELS CONSTRAINED TO CON-

TINUE ITS REPORTING ON THE AFTERMATH OF WHAT WAS ESSENTIALLY
A MINOR INCIDENT.

2. THE THAI MILITARY CONTINUE TO REFLECT THEIR CONCERN
OVER INCIDENT. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER/DEFENSE MINISTER/
MAJOR GENERAL PRAMAN ADIREKSAN VISITED NONG KHAI NOV
23 AND SAID THAILAND WOULD RETAKE ITS GROUNDED PATROL
BOAT WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, WARNING LAOS THAT THAILAND
WOULD USE FORCE IF THE LAO TRIED TO STOP THE SALVAGE
OPERATION. (CONSULATE UDORN REPORTS THERE IS SOME POSSI-
BILITY THE RTG MAY TRY TO BRING BACK ITS BOAT NOV 24.)
REINFORCEMENTS OF THAI TROOPS, ARTILLERY, AND TANKS HAVE
REPORTEDLY ARRIVED ON THE SCENE.

3. THAI PRESS REPORTS THAT FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI
CHUNHAWAN INVITED SOVIET AMBASSADOR BORIS ILYICHEV TO LUNCH
NOV 22 TO EXPLAIN THE THAI VIEW OF THE INCIDENT, TO
ASSURE THAT THE RTG WAS NOT ACCUSING THE USSR OF BEING
THE "THIRD COUNTRY" PUSHING LAOS TOWARD TAKING SUCH HOSTILE
ACTIONS, TO EXPRESS HIS GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE FOR A COMPROMISE
WITH LAOS, AND TO NOTE ITS DISAPPOINTMENT OVER NORTH VIET-
NAM'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF IMMEDIATE SUPPORT FOR LAOS WITHOUT
KNOWING DETAILS OF THE INCIDENT. CHATCHAI TOLD THE PRESS
THAT HE DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH ILYICHEV BECAUSE "WE
KNEW THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS QUITE CLOSE TO LAOS". UNDER-
SECRETARY OF STATE PHAEN WANNEMETHI HELD A SIMILAR SESSION
WITH PRC CHARGE U TZU-PO.

4. PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT TOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE
NOV 24 THAT LAOS IS REFUSING TO NEGOTIATE ON THE
ISSUE. HE SAID HIS GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS THAT THE USE OF
MILITARY FORCE TO PROTECT THAILAND, ITS SOVEREIGNTY AND
INDEPENDENCE, IS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY. HOWEVER, IN ANY
DISPUTE, THE GOVERNMENT MUST TRY TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLU-
TION, AND UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD ARMED FORCE BE
USED ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT.

5. FINALLY, CHATCHAI DEFENDED TO THE PRESS,
PRIOR TO HIS
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 24720 241522Z

DEPARTURE FOR THE U.S. NOV 23, THAILAND'S INTERPRETA-
TION OF WHERE THE BORDER LIES AND CLAIM THAT THE THAI
VESSEL IS ON A THAI SANDBANK. HE SAID HE AGREES THE
BOAT SHOULD BE REMOVED BECAUSE ITS PRESENT LOCATION ONLY
CAUSES RESENTMENT AND BAD FEELINGS. HE THEN URGED THE PRESS
NOT TO CONSIDER THE PRESENT DISPUTE WITH LAOS A SERIOUS
ONE.

6. COMMENT: THE LATTER IS A POINT WHICH DA HAS ALSO
MADE IN REF B AND WITH WHICH THE EMBASSY ASSOCIATES IT-
SELF. NONETHELESS, INCIDENTS OF THIS KIND HAVE A POTENTIAL
FOR DEVELOPING INTO SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS. THAI SEEM
AWARE OF THIS PROBLEM. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SEVERAL SENIOR
THAI GENERAL OFFICERS ARE IN OR NEAR NONG KHAI FOR THE
RECOVERY OPERATION, EVIDENTLY TO ENSURE THAT MATTER DOES
NOT RPT NOT ESCALATE DUE TO MISUNDERSTANDING OR MISJUDGMENT.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

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